

## ASKING QUESTION METHOD IN L1 FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS: DOES IT FACILITATE COMPREHENSION?

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### Abstract

*Asking question method in L1 is a promising method in improving students' speaking in English. This study adopted descriptive qualitative design with the subjects of 31 students of grade X at SMK Negeri 1 Raren Batuah, Central Kalimantan. The main data were obtained from the results of students' test scores of speaking about procedure text, and the supporting data were taken from the result of questionnaire. The research finding shows a considerable increase in English speaking when the students were asked questions of AQM using L1 that enhanced comprehension.*

**Key words:** Asking question method in L1, English Speaking

## **INTRODUCTION**

English speaking becomes a common problem that students faced in SMK Raren Batuah, Central Kalimantan, that they need an appropriate method to solve their problem. There are many methods to solve this problem, among others by using L1 in asking question method (AQM) to improve the students' speaking ability. Several studies have demonstrated the benefits of using L1 to improve comprehension of the target language. For example, Villamil and de Guerore (1996: 60) analysed the discourse of Spanish-speaking university students while they were engaged in peer revision of their target language (English). Their data demonstrated that L1 was an essential tool for making meaning of written or spoken text, retrieving language from memory, exploring and expanding content, guiding their action with asking question method, and maintaining dialogue. Similarly, Swain and Lapkin (2000: 71), in their examination of the L1 used by 22 pairs of Grade 8 French Immersion students as they completed dictogloss and jigsaw tasks, found that if the students had not used L1 as a means of negotiation and communication, the task may not have been accomplished as

effectively, or even they might not have been accomplished at all.

The use of L1 becomes an argument for many English teachers. There have been many theoretical arguments both for and against the use of L1 in the Target Language (TL); however, there have been little research carried out which has measured the exact effects of L1 use in English teaching classrooms.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Teaching speaking by using L1 in asking question method (AQM) is one of the ways to check whether students are able to use English. It is very important to use L1 for the students in a classroom but the L1 and target language (TL) must be used correctly and clearly in the classroom as well. The students are sometimes afraid when they have to speak full in English. The teacher should be able to manage it well. The use of AQM in L1 is an important aspect of classroom interaction. It means that through AQM in L1 the students might seek information related to the topic being discussed in speaking class and produce well organized ideas and interaction.

However, learning speaking English is assured not easy. Many classroom activities have failed in creating an effective

language learning due to the students' passivity and many students difficulties in speaking. In language classroom, one of the ways to encourage students to be actively involved in speaking class is group or pair activity by using AQM in L1. The use of AQM in L1 is a promising method that invites students to be able to answer the questions easily by discussing in their group or their partners to master the subject matter that they learn more. As stated by Buren (2001), before they answered the questions in L1, they must understand the subject matter that was given by the teacher so that they could bring up the questions that they wanted to answers from the subject matter that they did not understand yet.

One major problem the teachers usually face within the English classroom is that students are passive in interactive activities; once the teachers ask a question, only one or two students raise their hands to answer the questions. This may be true in case of speaking. Not understanding the questions is believed as one reason that students are unwilling to participate in speaking in English. Thus, using AQM in L1 is to train students understand the questions and express the answers in English. Schweers (1999: 7) conducted a study with EFL students and their 19 teachers in a Spanish context to investigate

their attitudes toward using L1 in the TL classroom. He found that 88.7% of Spanish students studying English wanted L1 used in the class because they believed it facilitated learning. Students also desired up to 39% of class time to be spent in L1. Burden (2001) investigated the attitudes of 290 students and 73 teachers at five universities. The results showed that both students and teachers believed the importance of L1 in explaining new vocabulary, giving instruction, talking about tests, grammar instruction, checking for understanding and relaxing the students. Another similar research conducted by Tang (2002) in a Chinese context with 100 students and 20 teachers depicts similar results. The research showed that limited and judicious use of the L1 in the English classroom did not reduce students' exposure to English, but rather can assist understanding in the teaching learning process.

The present study was done to know whether the use of AQM in L1 could increase the students' comprehension of the subject matter, which was shown in their scores in English speaking of Grade X of Teknik Komputer Jaringan at SMKN 1 Raren Batuah, Central Kalimantan.

## METHOD

This study applied descriptive qualitative design. The data were gained from the result of speaking tests of procedure text in English before and after the subjects of Grade X of Teknik Komputer Jaringan of SMK Negeri 1 Raren Batuah, Central Kalimantan were given AQM in L1. Procedure text has been given to and learnt by the students as a sub subject in English stated in the school curriculum. The subjects consisted of 10 male students and 21 female students. The students were considered fulfill the Criteria of Minimum Mastery (KKM) used in that school in speaking English if the score was  $\geq 55$ . The supporting data were taken from the result of questionnaire, which included simple questions about the students' attitude toward the use of AQM in L1. Data analysis used in this research was descriptive analysis presented in percentage and analysed by factual information systematically.

## Finding and Discussion

As stated in the previous section, the tests were distributed to the 31 students as the subject of the study, before and after they were given AQM in L1 questions. The questions concerned about the subject matter being discussed, i.e. about procedure

text. The result is presented in Table 1 as follows.

**Table1. Students' Test Results**

No.	Student code	Test before given AQM in L1		Test after given AQM in L1	
		Score	KKM	Score	KKM
1	BD	39	NA	57	A
2	BP	43	NA	61	A
3	CB	75	A	89	A
4	DR	71	A	82	A
5	EN	39	NA	46	NA
6	ES	43	NA	61	A
7	FM	39	NA	46	NA
8	FI	43	NA	43	NA
9	FA	75	NA	82	A
10	HO	46	A	57	A
11	HA	75	A	89	A
12	IM	36	NA	54	NA
13	NM	39	NA	57	A
14	JR	43	NA	61	A
15	LA	43	NA	61	A
16	MP	36	NA	46	NA
17	MA	39	NA	50	NA
18	MD	46	NA	65	A
19	MC	43	NA	65	A
20	NK	46	NA	68	A
21	RA	43	NA	57	A
22	RE	39	NA	54	NA
23	SF	43	NA	57	A
24	SA	43	NA	68	A
25	SR	43	NA	57	A

26	SE	43	NA	57	A
27	SS	50	NA	61	A
28	TH	39	NA	54	A
29	TU	39	NA	71	A
30	AM	50	NA	68	A
31	MI	36	NA	57	A
Percentage		A = 12.90	NA = 81.10	A = 77.42	NA = 22.58

Notes:

KKM = Criteria of Minimum Mastery ( $\geq 55$ )

NA = Not Achieved; A = Achieved

From the result of the tests above, the use of AQM in L1 could be seen to increase the score in speaking English of procedure text. Before being given AQM in L1, only 12.90% students could reach the KKM. After they were asked using AQM in L1 the percentage increased to 77.42%. It means AQM in L1 might enhance the students' comprehension of the subject matter being discussed. This is in line with the study of Tang (2002) that judicious use of the L1 in the English classroom could assist the students' understanding in the teaching learning process. Thus, it can be stated that using AQM in L1 is able to train students to understand the questions and express the answers in English.

The questionnaire was distributed to the students after they joined the tests. It was prepared to support the main data above. It consisted of 5 simple questions

related to the use of AQM in L1. The result is depicted in Table 2 as follows.

**Table 2. Result of Questionnaire**

No	Questions	Student's answer			
		Yes		No	
		Number	%	Number	%
1	Should L1 in asking question method be used in the classroom?	31	100	-	-
2	Do you use L1 in asking question method in the classroom discussions with your classmates?	31	100	-	-
3	Why do you think it is necessary to use L1 in asking question method in the classroom?	To help define some abstract words, to understand new vocabulary, to clarify difficult explanation			
4	Do you think the use of L1 in asking question method in the English classroom help you in speaking English?	29	93.5	2	6.5
5	How often do you think L1 in asking question method should be used in the English classroom?	Frequently, as many as possible			

Based on the result of the questionnaire above, the students needed L1 in asking question method to improve their speaking skill. All of the students (100%) agreed in using L1 in English classroom. They could understand the learning process more when they were using L1 to help them define some abstract words or new vocabulary, and to clarify difficult explanation. This is similar to the research result of Schweers (1999) that most of Spanish students studying English wanted L1 used in the class because they believed it facilitated learning. As also stated in the answers of the questionnaire, the students believed that the use of L1 should be used frequently or as many as possible. It means that L1 might be used as a facilitating tool to improve the TL proficiency of students.

Meanwhile, the students' understanding of procedure text as the subject matter they were learning was enhanced when they were discussing it in L1 with their classmates. As depicted in Table 2 above, 100% of the students stated that when they were asked by the teacher to discuss procedure text in group discussion with their classmates, they were using L1. Moreover, 93.5% of the students stated that the use of L1 in AQM was helpful in speaking in English. This is also supported by the research result of Burden (2001) that

the students must understand the subject matter that was given by the teacher so that they could bring up the questions that they wanted to comprehend the subject matter that they did not understand yet. All these means that L1 should still be judiciously used to enhance speaking in English.

Despite the fact that the empirical benefit of using L1 are readily apparent, there are still many teachers who argue about the importance of L1 in the English teaching and learning process. However, if L1 is utilized well and presented communicatively, it can be a facilitating tool to improve the TL proficiency of students. The use of AQM in L1 can give positive effects communicatively in which L1 can also assist English teachers in helping the students comprehend the subject matter.

## CONCLUSION

The study shows that the use of L1 in asking question method (AQM) in the English classroom can increase the students' speaking of procedure text in English. The finding can make teachers realize that using L1 in AQM is beneficial in English classrooms, especially in secondary level. It indicates that the L1 in AQM gains more benefit by incorporating the students' L1 in AQM as the learning tool

and a facilitator for the student to comprehend the subject matter better.

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